Chapter 1

Hey, It Really Does Have Everything I Need

In This Chapter

- Identifying the important parts of your Mac laptop
- Comparing the different MacBook models
- Locating the right home for your computer
- Unpacking, plugging in stuff, and getting hooked up
- Playing with your bundled software
- Buying additional stuff that you might need

Most action films have one scene in common: I call it the "gear up" scene, where the good guys strap on their equipment in preparation for battle. (It doesn't matter what era: You see "gear up" scenes in *Gladiator, Aliens,* and virtually every movie Arnold has made.) You're sure to see lots of clicking straps and equipping of offensive weapons (and sometimes even a dash of war paint). The process usually takes a minute or so, all told with whiplash camera work and stirring martial music in the background.

Well, fellow Macintosh road warrior, it takes only *two seconds* and *one move* for you to gear up: closing the lid. That's because your MacBook is a self-contained world, providing virtually everything you'll find on a desktop iMac, Mac mini, or Mac Pro. This is indeed the decade of the laptop, meshing nicely with your cellphone and that wireless connection at your local coffee shop. You have selected the right companion for the open road.

Unlike some of Apple's other designs, such as the Mac mini or the iMac, your MacBook looks similar to a PC laptop running Windows. (In fact, an Intel-based Mac laptop can run Windows, if you absolutely must.) But your laptop holds a number of pleasant surprises that no PC laptop can offer — and, in the case of the MacBook Air and MacBook Pro Retina, you'll lose pounds and inches from your chassis! In this chapter, I introduce you to the hardware and all the major parts of the machine — you even find out how to unpack and connect your computer. And, as frosting on the cake, I preview the software of which Apple is so proud, as well as the accessories that you should buy now rather than later.

Welcome to your Mac laptop, good reader. Gear up!

An Overview of Your Mac Laptop

Sure, your MacBook Pro might be less than an inch thin (a MacBook Air and a MacBook Pro Retina are even more svelte than that — I get to that later in the chapter), but a lot of superb design lives inside, and you'll encounter the same parts that you'd find in a desktop machine. In the following sections, I discuss those important parts — both the stuff you can see and the stuff shoehorned within.

The parts you probably recognize

Every laptop requires some of the same gizmos. Figure 1-1 helps you track them down. Of course, as you'd expect, a computer has a body of sorts in which all the innards and brains are stored, a display screen, a keyboard, a trackpad or other pointing device, and ports for powering and exchanging data with outside toys.

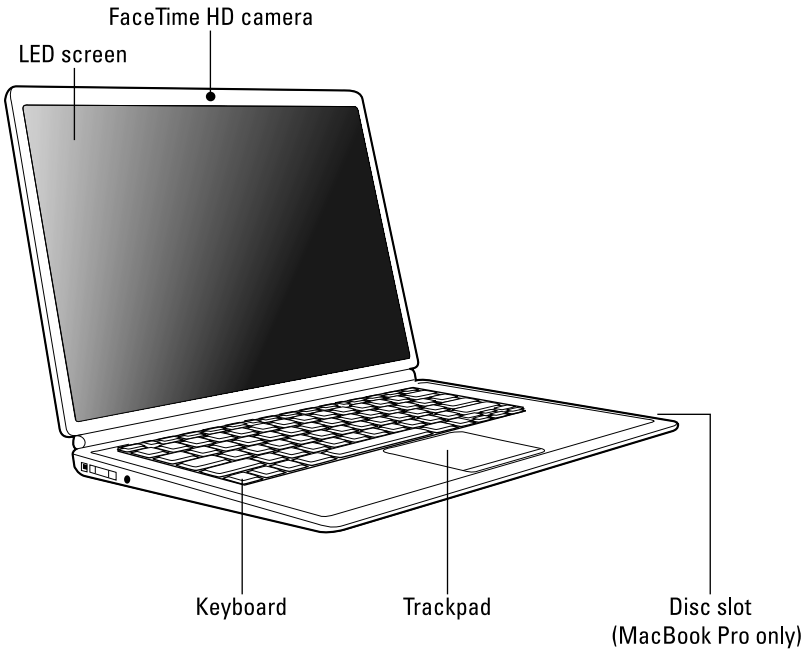

Figure 1-1: The charismatic form of a typical Mac laptop.

Feeling outdated? Never!

Are you using an older MacBook? It seems that Apple's product line changes every time you tear a page from your 12-month calendar. In addition, every new generation of laptops includes new whiz-bang features. Sometimes you can add those features separately to your older machine — such as an external video camera — but you can't update some things, such as your MacBook's motherboard. Sigh.

Here's my take on this situation: If your older laptop does what you need at a pace you can accept, there's *no need* to upgrade it.

Skeptical? Here's the proof: Before my upgrade to a MacBook Air, yours truly was lugging a pristine iBook G3, which booted OS X Tiger and did absolutely everything that I demanded. (A little more patience was required, certainly, but technology authors are simply *brimming* with patience.) The moral: Avoid the upgrade fever unless you really need a new companion!

If you're the proud owner of an older MacBook, as long as it can run OS X Mountain Lion you can still enjoy this book and discover new tips and tricks from it! Unless the current breed of Intel-based Mac laptops has a feature that you absolutely can't use on your MacBook (such as USB 3.0 support), you can sail on with your current computer, fiercely proud of The Bitten Apple that appears on the cover. (In fact, older MacBooks have features that no longer appear on some current models, such as optical drives and built-in Ethernet ports.) Although this book was written with the MacBook Pro, MacBook Air, and MacBook Pro Retina lines in mind, virtually everything you read here still applies to your older laptop. Unless it's steam-driven, of course.

That magnificent screen

What a view you have! Today's Mac laptops feature a 13- or 15-inch LED display. Most displays are available in glossy or antiglare finish: The former is a good choice for the brightest colors and deepest blacks, and the latter is a good choice where reflections might be a problem.

LED screens use far less electricity than their antique CRT ancestors do, and they emit practically no radiation.

Apple's laptop screens offer a *widescreen* aspect ratio (the screen is considerably wider than it is tall), which augurs well for those who enjoy watching DVD movies. (A favorite editor of mine loves it when I use the antique word *augur,* meaning *to predict or foretell.*)

That reminds me: Throw away your printed dictionary! You won't need it because OS X Mountain Lion includes the fantastic Dictionary widget, which uses the Internet to retrieve definitions from the online Oxford American Dictionary site (and yes, it does contain *augur*). More on widgets in general in Chapter 5.

The keyboard and trackpad

Hey, here's something novel for your laptop. Unlike the external input devices on a standard desktop computer, your Mac has a built-in keyboard and trackpad (which does the job of a mouse). The keyboard is a particular favorite of mine for a few reasons:

- You can control the volume or mute all that noise completely.
- You can use your MacBook's illuminated keyboard, which is perfect for darkened dorm rooms and airplane flights.
- A handy-dandy Media Eject key on the MacBook Pro keyboard lets you eject a CD or DVD.

The disc slot

You'll notice a long groove on the right side of your MacBook Pro. No, it's not for your credit card. This slot accepts CDs and DVDs into your optical drive. If the drive is empty, loading a disc is as simple as sliding it in an inch or so; the drive sucks in the disc automatically. Note that this drive only accepts standard-sized CD and DVD discs — don't try to load a minidisc or an odd credit-card-shaped optical disc into your drive.

Neither the MacBook Air nor the MacBook Pro Retina has an internal optical drive (more on both models later in this chapter). You use either the CD & DVD Sharing feature in Mountain Lion to read discs remotely (from another Mac or PC on your network), or you can pick up an external optical drive from Apple for about $80. (Such is the price you pay for super-thin and super-light.)

"Luke, the printed label side of the disc should always be *facing you* when you load a disc. Always."

Food for your ears

A machine this nice had better have great sound, and the Mac doesn't disappoint. You have a couple of options for Mac laptop audio:

- All Mac laptops sport built-in stereo speakers (and a microphone to boot).
- Use the built-in audio Line Out jacks to connect your Mac's audio to a pair of headphones, a more powerful (and expensive) external speaker system, or a home stereo system.

The power cable

Sorry, you can't get a wireless power system . . . yet. (Apple's working hard on that one.) However, the MacBook Pro was the first major release of a

laptop with a magnetic power connector; the MacBook Air followed suit soon after. The MagSafe 2 connector reduces the chances of your pride and joy being yanked off a desk when someone trips over the power cord, because the magnetic closure pops off under significant strain. Now that's *sassy.*

When you connect your power cable, an amber light on the cable connector indicates that your battery is charging; a green light indicates that the battery is fully charged.

Many MacBook owners ask me whether they should disconnect the power cable after the battery is fully charged or leave the power cable connected. I leave the cable connected — it won't cause any damage to your MacBook, and you can continue to use your laptop while it's charging. (Oh, and road warriors prefer a laptop's battery that's always topped off when it's time to go mobile!)

The power button

Yep, you have a power button, too. It's at the upper-right corner of the keyboard, bearing the familiar "circle with a vertical line" logo.

The FaceTime HD camera

Check out that tiny square lens above your screen. That's a built-in FaceTime HD camera, which allows you to chat with others in a videoconferencing environment by using Mountain Lion's Messages and FaceTime features. You can even take photos with the camera, using the Photo Booth software that comes with your laptop, or set up a travelin' webcam. (If you need a higher-resolution camera — or one that can be easily turned or tilted — check out the discussion of a favorite of mine later in this chapter.)

The battery

Apple's current MacBook computers do not include user-replaceable batteries — the battery is sealed inside the case and can be replaced only by an Apple technician. However, you should get several years of trouble-free operation from your MacBook's battery.

Although your laptop can display in OS X Mountain Lion the remaining battery power, you can also monitor the battery level on a MacBook Pro from outside the case! A series of tiny LED lights on the left side of the case indicate the remaining battery charge — push the charge button, and you'll see a number of lights that correspond to the approximate charge remaining.

The holes called ports

The next stop on your tour of Planet Laptop is Port Central — those rows of holes on the sides of your computer. Each port connects a different type of cable or device, allowing you to easily add all sorts of functionality to your computer.

Each of these stellar holes is identified by an icon to help you identify it. Here's a list of what you'll find and a quick rundown on what these ports do.

The following connections are used for external devices and networking:

- **Thunderbolt port:** The Thunderbolt port is the expansion racehorse for today's MacBooks, offering the fastest data transfer rates and the capability to add all sorts of peripherals, from external hard drives to monitors to wired Ethernet connections! (A *peripheral* is another silly techno-nerd term that means a separate device you connect to your computer.) Thunderbolt devices are far more expensive than their FireWire and USB cousins, but prices are dropping as more Thunderbolt peripherals arrive on the market.

  

  Although Thunderbolt-compatible monitors are available, they're significantly more expensive than a standard display. Luckily, you can also buy an adapter for this port that allows you to send the video signal from your laptop to another VGA or DVI monitor.

- **FireWire port:** These ports can connect external hard drives and optical drives, as well as peripherals such as your digital video (DV) camcorder. If you have a current MacBook Pro model, you have a fast FireWire 800 port. (The MacBook Air and MacBook Pro Retina models don't have a FireWire port.)

- **USB port(s):** Short for *Universal Serial Bus,* the familiar USB port is the jack-of-all-trades in today's world of computer add-ons. Most external devices that you want to connect to your laptop (such as portable hard drives, scanners, and digital cameras) use a USB port, including the iPod. Depending on the model of laptop, you'll have either two or three USB 3.0 ports available. USB 3.0 connections are much faster than the old USB 2.0 standard, but they still accept USB 2.0 devices running at the slower speed.

  

  Get the lowdown on Thunderbolt, FireWire, and USB ports in Chapter 22.

- **Ethernet port:** Today's MacBook Pro laptops include a standard 10/100/1000 Ethernet port, so the laptop is ready to join your existing wired Ethernet network. (Alternatively, you can go wireless for your network connection; more on that in the next section and in Chapter 12.) Because both the MacBook Air and the MacBook Pro Retina are

designed to be completely wireless, they don't have a wired Ethernet port; if necessary, you can add a Thunderbolt-to-Gigabit-Ethernet adapter to add a wired network port to your Air or Retina. (Apple sells one for about $30.)

- **SD/SDXC card slot:** All MacBook models include an SD (Secure Digital) or SDXC (Secure Digital Extended Capacity) card slot, allowing you to plug SD or SDXC memory cards from digital cameras, cellphones, and portable devices directly into your laptop.

The connections that follow are used for external video and audio:

- **HDMI port:** The MacBook Pro Retina includes an HDMI port, allowing a direct connection between your laptop and high-definition displays and TVs.
- **Headphone/Optical Output port:** You can send the high-quality audio from your rectangular beast to a set of standard headphones or an optical digital audio device such as a high-end home theater system.
- **Audio Line In jack:** Last (but certainly not least) is the Audio Line In jack on the 15-inch MacBook Pro, which allows you to pipe the signal from another audio device into your laptop. This connector comes in particularly handy when you record MP3 files from your old vinyl albums or when you want to record loops in GarageBand.

Don't forget the parts you can't see

When you bought your new digital pride and joy, you probably noticed a number of subtle differences between the low-end MacBook Air and the über-expensive, top-end MacBook Pro and MacBook Pro Retina models. I call these differences the *Important Hidden Stuff* (or IHS, if you're addicted to acronyms already), and they're just as important as the parts and ports that you can see.

Internal storage devices are as follows:

- **CPU:** Today's Mac laptops feature the latest Intel Core i5 and i7 processors. Of course, the faster the processor, the better. (Definitely *not* rocket science.)
- **Storage:** Today's MacBook models are equipped with either traditional magnetic hard drives or solid-state drives. The drive capacities are different across the entire MacBook product line, but only the MacBook Pro can be ordered from Apple with either magnetic hard drives or solid-state storage.

The MacBook Pro Retina and MacBook Air, on the other hand, are available only with solid-state drives, which have a number of advantages over traditional magnetic hard drives: You'll find no moving parts in a solid-state drive, and it offers better performance than a standard hard drive. Think of the solid-state drive as an internal USB flash drive, which uses RAM chips rather than magnetic platters to hold your data! Pricey compared to a magnetic hard drive, but *super sweet*.

- **Optical drive:** Okay, I'm cheating a little here. I mention the optical drive in an earlier section, but all you can see is the slot, so it qualifies as an IHS item. Depending on your MacBook, your computer includes one of the following:
  - *No built-in optical drive*

    The MacBook Air and MacBook Pro Retina can be equipped with an external SuperDrive, or you can use another computer's drive remotely over your network (both wired and wireless, although wired is faster and far more reliable).
  - *A DVD-R/CD-RW SuperDrive, which can play and record both CDs and DVDs*

    If you prefer to burn Blu-ray discs on your MacBook Pro, don't give up hope of recording! Thanks to those handy FireWire and USB ports, it's child's play to add an external Blu-ray recorder.

Wireless communications devices include the following:

- **Wireless Ethernet:** "Look, Ma, no wires!" As I mention earlier, you can connect your laptop to an existing wireless Ethernet network. All current Mac laptops have built-in AirPort Extreme hardware. With wireless connectivity, you can share documents with another computer in another room, share a single high-speed Internet connection betwixt several computers, or enjoy wireless printing. Truly *sassy!*

  

  Although Apple would want you to build your wireless wonderland with an Apple AirPort Extreme Base Station or a Time Capsule unit — go figure — you can use your Mac with any standard 802.11 wireless network. And yes, PCs and Macs can intermingle on the same wireless network without a hitch. (Scandalous, ain't it?)
- **Bluetooth:** Let's get the old "digital pirate" joke out of the way: "Arrgh, matey, I needs me a wireless parrot." (Engineers again . . . sheesh.) Although strangely named, Bluetooth is another form of wireless connectivity. This time, however, the standard was designed for accessories such as your keyboard and mouse and devices such as a personal digital assistant (PDA) and a cellphone.

Here's the video display device:

- **Video card:** If your applications rely heavily on high-speed 3-D graphics, you'll be pleased as punch to discover that today's MacBook Pro and MacBook Pro Retina laptops can be ordered with the muscle-bound NVIDIA GeForce GT 650M. This card is well suited to 3-D modeling, video editing, and well, honestly, blasting the enemy into small smoking pieces with aplomb.

Meet the MacBooks

So far in this chapter, I've discussed the common hardware shared by today's MacBook models, but it's time to compare the MacBook Air, MacBook Pro, and MacBook Pro Retina with an eye to selecting the right one for you. (Unless you decide to pick up one of each — certainly an elegant choice, but not everyone has that option!)

For example, consider the least expensive (and lightest) MacBook: The MacBook Air is unique for both its size and weight (see Figure 1-2). And yet the Air is just like the MacBook Pro and the MacBook Pro Retina. Well, mostly.

Figure 1-2: Behold the MacBook Air.

"Hold on, Mark. How can it be so singular and yet share so much with its road warrior siblings?" I answer that question in the following sections, which discuss the many similarities and the handful of striking differences between the three laptops in the MacBook line. If you're considering buying a MacBook, these sections can help you decide whether you'd like to go ultra-thin or stick with the more powerful laptop crowd.

One thing's for sure — Apple *never* creates a mundane design!

Comparing 'twixt MacBooks

Do you remember when Apple introduced those first iMacs? Although they shared the same basic components as any computer — a monitor, keyboard, ports, speakers, and cables — the iMac was revolutionary because it was completely self-contained. And it came in colors. And it didn't have a floppy drive. In fact, Apple had redesigned the common computer with the focus on *style* and *ease of use,* and had scrapped the floppy drive (and rightly so, seeing as how floppies had become practically useless and were unreliable, to boot).

I consider both the MacBook Air and the MacBook Pro Retina to be extensions of the iMac revolution. With these designs, Apple has focused this time on *physical dimensions* and *weight,* and has tossed anything that isn't absolutely necessary for the lecture hall, boardroom, or city park. However, I'm happy to note that these ultralight MacBooks are no toys, nor are they bare-bones netbooks. You'll find the MacBook Pro Retina as powerful as the standard MacBook Pro, and the Air even shares some of the features of the MacBook Pro.

What are the MacBook similarities?

Consider the similarities between the MacBooks:

- **Widescreen display:** Each MacBook model sports a widescreen LED backlit display — the Air offers either an 11-inch or a 13-inch display, and the MacBook Pro can be ordered with a 13-inch or 15-inch display. The superb Retina display on the MacBook Pro Retina is the star of the show, however, with the highest resolution available on any MacBook. (It's available only in a 15-inch display.).
- **Intel Core i5 and i7 processor:** All three MacBooks can be ordered from Apple with Core i5 or i7 power.
- **Keyboard and trackpad:** All three MacBooks share the same backlit keyboard and use the same Multi-Touch trackpad. (Read more about Multi-Touch in Chapter 4.)
- **Mountain Lion:** All current MacBooks run the latest version of OS X with aplomb.
- **FaceTime HD:** Every MacBook is video ready, using the same FaceTime HD camera. You can record audio with the built-in microphone as well — in fact, the Retina has two microphones. (Read more about video chatting and FaceTime in Chapter 13.)

- **Sealed battery:** You can't swap batteries with any of Apple's current MacBook line because the battery is sealed inside. (Think iPod.)
- **Wireless support:** Each MacBook has both built-in AirPort Extreme hardware (802.11n) and built-in Bluetooth hardware. (Read more about AirPort Extreme in Chapter 12.)

I think most Apple laptop owners would agree that these major MacBook features show there's no underpowered pushover in the lineup!

So what's so flippin' radical?

I'm glad you asked! Here's the checklist of striking differences that set the Air apart from the MacBook Pro and MacBook Pro Retina:

- **Physical dimensions:** Apple doesn't call this machine the Air for nothing! The current Air laptop measures a mere 0.68 inches in height (at its tallest point) when closed, 11.8 inches in width (for the 11-inch display model), and 7.56 inches in depth. Oh, and hold on to your chair for this one: Our lightweight champ weighs in at less than 2 ½ pounds! (That's a couple of pounds you won't be carrying around all day at that convention expo. Take it from this traveler: You *will* feel the refreshing difference in just an hour or two.) The MacBook Pro Retina, on the other hand, weighs in at almost 4½ pounds, while the more powerful MacBook Pro is over 5½ pounds.
- **Cost:** At the time of this writing, two versions of the laptop are available. An entry-level 11-inch MacBook Air will set you back $999, and the top-of-the-line 13-inch Air is $1,499. The more expensive Air is equipped with a higher-capacity larger screen, a more capacious solid-state drive, and a faster CPU. By comparison, the 15-inch MacBook Pro is $1,799 and the Retina display pushes the cost of the MacBook Pro Retina to a whopping $2,199 in its base configuration.
- **Ports:** The Air offers only a handful of ports: two USB 3.0 ports, an Audio Line Out jack, and a Thunderbolt port for connecting an external monitor or high-speed drive. Note that I didn't mention a FireWire port, which can be a big problem for Apple old-timers like me. I have a huge collection of FireWire devices. The Retina also has no FireWire port (but it does include an HDMI port for connecting the laptop to a high-definition TV or external display). Both the Air and the Retina also lack a wired Ethernet port, so you'll need the Thunderbolt-to-Gigabit-Ethernet adapter from Apple. Rats.
- **Sealed case:** You can't add or replace RAM modules on the Air or the Retina — if you haven't ordered your laptop yet, it's a *very* good idea to configure your MacBook with the maximum RAM it can carry, because you won't be able to add more in the future. On the other hand, the

MacBook Pro can be upgraded to 16GB of RAM by upgrading the RAM modules.

- **No built-in optical drive:** *Whoa, Nellie!* This difference is a big one, and it applies to both the Air and the Retina. Apple decided that owners of these slimmer, trimmer laptops are likely to use a wireless connection for transferring files and media. But what if you have to reinstall applications available only on disc? If you need to read or burn discs, you can buy a separate external USB SuperDrive for about $80, or you can use the Remote Disc feature and share the drive on another computer. (More on Remote Disc in the section "Sharing a CD or DVD drive," later in this chapter.)

As you can see, these striking differences make the choice between a MacBook Air, a MacBook Pro, and a MacBook Pro Retina easy indeed. To wit:

- The Air is designed for the traveler who appreciates minimum weight and size. These folks see the MacBook Air as a race car: nimble, with reduced weight and no unnecessary frills. (Think of a typical NASCAR entry: Who needs an expensive stereo or air conditioning?)
- The MacBook Pro Retina is all about the brilliant Retina display, of course, but it's also designed to be somewhat slimmer and lighter than a standard MacBook Pro — and, of course, it's considerably faster than the Air. The Retina appeals to presenters, graphics professionals, and video editors who will appreciate the higher-resolution display and the direct HDMI output.
- I highly recommend that you stick with the more conventional MacBook Pro if you don't mind the extra weight and prefer its additional versatility, including the standard set of ports and built-in optical drive.

Look, Ma, no moving parts!

You're probably familiar with the common species of *usbius flashimus* — more commonly called the USB Flash drive. With one of these tiny devices, you get the equivalent of a 4–256GB hard drive that plugs into a USB 2.0 or 3.0 port, allowing you to pack your data with you as you jet across the continents. But have you ever asked yourself, "Self, why don't they make internal drives that use this same technology?"

Actually, dear reader, solid-state drives have been around for a number of years now (think iPod shuffle and iPod nano). Unfortunately, however, the solid-state memory used in today's flash drives gets pretty expensive as capacity increases. In fact, the cost has been the limiting factor, as a solid-state drive offers a number of advantages that set it apart from a conventional magnetic hard drive:

- **No moving parts:** Unlike a typical magnetic hard drive, you find no read-write heads and no magnetic platter — just gobs of happy silicon memory chips. In effect, a solid-state drive works along the same lines as your MacBook's system RAM. Unlike your Mac's RAM, though, a solid-state drive doesn't lose the data it stores when you turn off your laptop. As you can imagine, no moving parts on a computer in motion is superior on two levels:
  - The solid-state drive never wears out or needs replacing.
  - If your laptop is accidentally abused (think, gets knocked off your desk), it's far less likely that you'll lose a hard drive's worth of priceless data when it hits the ground.
- **Speed:** Oh, my goodness, is this thing fast! Your MacBook will boot, restart, or awaken in far less time, and everything you do on your laptop will benefit from the speed boost. A solid-state drive can read data far faster than a conventional magnetic hard drive.
- **Power usage:** Forget your hard drive spinning up from sleep mode. The solid-state drive uses far less power than a conventional hard drive, resulting in significantly longer battery life.
- **Blessed silence:** The solid-state drive is completely silent. (No more of that gargling noise while the disk is accessed. *Sweet.*)

Both the MacBook Air and the Retina are available only with a solid-state drive, but do you need the solid-state drive option for your MacBook Pro? The answer lies in your bank account (as well as your need for elbow room). If you can afford the extra expense of the solid-state drive and you can fit all your applications and data into the 128GB drive (or the even more expensive 256GB and 512GB drives), I heartily recommend that you consider joining Buck Rogers with the storage device of the future.

If you'd rather save that coin for something else, or you need a larger internal hard drive to hold things such as digital video and a massive collection of digital images, stick with the tried-and-true magnetic hard drive.

What if I need that pesky optical drive?

Can a laptop survive in the jungle that is Real Life without a DVD drive? The terse answer is *no.* I'll be honest here: Ripping an audio CD or watching a DVD movie without an optical drive is impossible. (Rather like a cheap tank of gas.) And the wonders of digital media are a big part of the iWorld. So what was Apple thinking?

First, a bit of explanation. Today's DVD drives are thin, but not Air and Retina thin. To create these stunning designs with truly revolutionary dimensions, Apple engineers had to leave out the drive. However, if you own a MacBook Air or MacBook Pro Retina, you have two choices when it comes to reading the contents of a CD or DVD: Go external, or find out how to share.

The external USB route

I have no problem toting around an external USB DVD burner with a MacBook Air. Heck, half the time, you're likely to leave it at home because most of us don't install software every day. The folks at Cupertino want you to download your movies from the iTunes Store and your software from the App Store, so if you follow the Apple Path, you still don't need an optical drive!

A USB SuperDrive from Apple costs a mere $80, and it can read and write DVDs as well as the built-in SuperDrive you find in the MacBook Pro.

You can also use any third-party USB DVD drive that's compatible with Apple's laptops and OS X Mountain Lion.

Sharing a CD or DVD drive

The other option for installing software or reading a DVD on the MacBook Air and MacBook Pro Retina is Mountain Lion's built-in CD/DVD Sharing feature. Sharing is an option if you have a wired or wireless network (see Chapter 12) with at least one of the following:

- A Macintosh running OS X Tiger, Leopard, Snow Leopard, Lion, or Mountain Lion
- A PC running Windows XP, Vista, 7, or 8 (and a Windows application supplied by Apple with your MacBook).

You can *only read from a shared optical drive.* You can't write data to the remote drive, even if that drive is a DVD recorder.

On the Macintosh with the optical drive, open System Preferences, click the Sharing icon, and then select the DVD or CD Sharing check box. Note that you can set whether the Mac will request your permission when another computer attempts to share the drive.

On a PC, display the Control Panel, click the DVD or CD Sharing icon, and then select the Enable DVD or CD Sharing check box. Again, you can specify that permission is required if security is a concern.

After you set up the shared drive, just load the disc and select the Remote Disc item in any Finder sidebar. (Remote Disc appears under the Devices heading in the sidebar.) Now you can access the drive as if it were directly connected to your MacBook Air or Retina. Ah, technology!

Location, Location, Location!

If you choose the wrong spot to park your new laptop, I can *guarantee* that you'll regret it. Some domiciles and office cubicles don't offer a choice — you have one desk at work, for example, and nobody's going to hand over another one — but if you can select a home for your MacBook, consider the important placement points in this section:

- **Keep things cool.** Your new laptop is silent, but that super-fast Intel Core i5 or i7 processor generates heat. Make sure that the location you choose is far from heating vents and shielded from direct sunlight. I also recommend a laptop cooling pad, which elevates the base of your laptop to allow air to circulate underneath.
- **Outlets are key!** Your computer needs a minimum of at least one nearby outlet, and perhaps as many as three:
  - A standard AC outlet (using a current adapter if you're traveling abroad, if necessary)
  - A telephone jack (if you have an external USB modem for connecting to the Internet or sending and receiving faxes)
  - A nearby Ethernet jack (if you use the MacBook Pro's built-in Ethernet port for connecting to a wired Ethernet network)

  If you prefer to send your data over the airwaves, consider wireless networking for your Mac — I discuss everything you need to know in Chapter 12.
- **Don't forget the lighting.** Let me act as your mom. (I know that's a stretch, but bear with me.) She'd say, "You can't possibly expect to work without decent lighting! You'll go blind!" She's right, you know. You need a desk lamp or floor lamp at a minimum if you need to refer to books or documents often in your work.
- **Plan to expand.** If your laptop hangs out on a desk, allow an additional foot of space on each side. That way, you have room for external peripherals, more powerful speakers, and an external keyboard and mouse if you need one.

  If you want to keep an external keyboard handy, consider using a laptop shelf. These Plexiglas or metal stands elevate your laptop several inches above the desk, putting the screen at a better ergonomic position and allowing you to park your keyboard and external mouse underneath.

Unpacking and Connecting Your Laptop

You're going to love the following sections. They're short and sweet because the configuration of a laptop on your desktop is a piece of cake. (Sorry about the cliché overload, but this really *is* easy.)

Unpacking for the road warrior

Follow these guidelines when unpacking your system:

- **Check for damage.** I've never had a box arrive from Apple with shipping damage, but I've heard horror stories from others (who claim that King Kong must have been working for That Shipping Company).

  Check all sides of your box before you open it. If you find significant damage, take a photograph (just in case).

- **Search for all the parts.** When you're removing those chunks o' foam, make certain that you've checked all sides of each foam block for parts snuggled therein or taped for shipment.

- **Keep all packing materials.** Do *not* head for the trash can with the box and packing materials. Keep your box and all packing materials for at least a year, until the standard Apple warranty runs out. If you have to ship the laptop to an Apple service center, the box and the original packing are the only way for your machine to fly.

  And now, a dramatic Mark's Maxim about cardboard containers:

  Smart computer owners keep their boxes far longer than a year. If you sell your laptop or move across the country, for example, you'll want that box. *Trust me on this one.*™

- **Store the invoice for safekeeping.** Your invoice is a valuable piece of paper, indeed.

  Save your original invoice in a plastic bag, along with your computer's manuals, original software, and other assorted hoo-hah. Keep the bag on your shelf or stored safely in your desk, and enjoy a little peace of mind.

- **Read the Mac's manual.** "Hey, wait a minute, Mark. Why do I have to read the manual from Apple along with this tome?" Good question, and here's the answer: The documentation from Apple might contain new and updated instructions that override what I tell you here. (For example, *"Never* cut the red wire. Cut the blue wire instead." Or something to that effect.) Besides, Apple manuals are rarely thicker than a restaurant menu.

You can always download the latest updated manuals for Apple computers in electronic format from Apple's website. (Adobe's PDF format is the standard for reading documents on your computer, and Mountain Lion can open and display any PDF document by using the Preview application or the QuickLook feature.) I always keep a copy of the PDF manual for my MacBook Air on my drive, just in case.

Connecting Cables 101

Your laptop makes all its connections simple, but your computer depends on you to get the outside wires and thingamabobs where they go.

The absolutely essential connection

After your new Mac is resting comfortably in its assigned spot (I assume that's a desktop), you need to make just one required connection: the power cable! Plug the cable into the corresponding MagSafe 2 socket on the MacBook first, and then plug 'er into that handy AC outlet. (After your battery is completely charged, of course, you can go mobile at a moment's notice.)

Adding the Internet to the mix

If you have Internet access or a local computer network, you need to make at least one of the following connections described in this section.

If you get on the Internet by dialing a standard phone number and your laptop has an external USB modem, just make two more connections:

1. **Plug one of the telephone cable's connectors into your external modem.**
2. **Plug the other telephone cable connector into your telephone line's wall jack.**

After you get your account information from your ISP, Chapter 12 has the details on configuring your modem and Internet settings for dial-up access.

If you have high-speed Internet service, or if you're in an office or a school with a local computer network, you can probably connect through your MacBook Pro's built-in Ethernet port (or by using the Thunderbolt-to-Gigabit-Ethernet adaptor with your MacBook Air or Retina). You make two connections:

1. **Plug one end of the Ethernet cable into the Ethernet port on the MacBook.**
2. **Plug the other end of the Ethernet cable into the Ethernet port from your network.**

   Your network port is probably one of the following: an Ethernet wall jack, an Ethernet hub or switch, or a cable or DSL Internet router (or sharing device).

Will you be joining a wireless network? If so, you find the information you need on configuring Mountain Lion for wireless networking in Chapter 12.

Great, a Lecture about Handling My Laptop

Proper handling of your laptop is important, so take a moment to cover the Rules of Proper Laptop Deportment. Okay, perhaps I'm lecturing a bit, but a little common sense goes a long way when handling *any* computer equipment, and your laptop is no different. (Scolding mode off.)

Keep these rules in mind while opening and carrying your laptop:

- **The cover is your friend.** Open your laptop's cover slowly, without jerking or bending it.
- **Close it before you move it.** By closing your laptop, you put your OS X operating system into sleep mode, and (if your MacBook uses a magnetic hard drive for storage) the hard drive automatically spins down, making it safer to move. The laptop is still on, and will spring back to life after you open the cover.
- **Don't stack stuff on your laptop.** You'd be surprised how many horror stories I've heard about laptop owners piling a stack of books or other heavy stuff on top of their computers. Remember that LED display? Made of glass?
- **Be nice to your keyboard.** Don't press too hard on those keys! Use the same amount of pressure that you use with a desktop computer keyboard.
- **Keep food and drinks far away.** Care to turn your laptop into a very expensive doorstop? Then go ahead and park your soda next to it. (Oh, and crumbs are perfect if you're interested in buying replacement keyboards.)
- **Keep your laptop as level as possible.** Using your laptop while it's tilted too far in any direction can eventually cause problems with your magnetic hard drive. I kid you not. (If you choose a solid-state hard drive, of course, this rule no longer applies!)

An Overview of Mac Software Goodness

The following sections answer the most common of all novice computer questions: "What the heck will I *do* with this thing?" You find additional details and exciting factoids about the software that you get for free, software you'll want to buy, and stuff you can do on the Internet.

What comes with my laptop?

Currently, Apple laptops ship with the following major software applications installed and ready to use:

- **OS X Mountain Lion:** Naturally, your MacBook comes preloaded with Mountain Lion.
- **The iLife suite:** You know you want these applications! They turn your Mac into a digital hub for practically every kind of high-tech device on the planet, including camcorders, digital cameras, portable music players, and even cellphones.

  Chapters 14–17 focus on the major iLife applications that will appeal to MacBook owners: iTunes, iPhoto, iMovie, and GarageBand.
- **Photo Booth and FaceTime:** You discover more about these applications elsewhere in the book. For now, suffice it to say that Photo Booth works with your laptop's FaceTime HD camera, as does FaceTime (the video-chatting application that can connect you with iPad, iPhone, and iPod touch owners).

The installed software on your MacBook might change as new programs become available.

Connecting to the Internet from your lap

What is a modern computer without the Internet? Apple gives you great tools to take full advantage of every road sign and off-ramp on the Information Superhighway right out of the box:

- **Web surfing:** I use Mountain Lion's Apple Safari web browser every single day. It's faster and better designed than Internet Explorer, with features such as tabbed browsing and Facebook and Twitter sharing.

  If *tabbed browsing* sounds like ancient Aztec to you, don't worry. Chapter 9 is devoted entirely to Safari.

- **Web searches:** Dashboard widgets can search the entire Internet for stocks, movie listings, airline schedules, dictionaries, and foreign language translations. I explain the Dashboard in Chapter 5.
- **Instant messaging:** *Messages* lets you use your MacBook to chat with others around the world for free on the Internet — by keyboard, voice, or full-color video. This is awesome stuff straight out of Dick Tracy and Buck Rogers. If you've never seen a video chat, you'll be surprised by just how good your friends and family look!

  Always wear a shirt when videoconferencing.

- **E-mail:** Soldier, Apple has you covered. The Mail application is a full-featured e-mail system, complete with defenses against the torrent of junk mail awaiting you. (Imagine a hungry digital mountain lion with an appetite for spam.) Send pictures and attached files to everyone on the planet, and look doggone good doing it.

Applications that rock

Dozens of small applications are supplied with OS X. I mention them in later chapters, but here are three good examples to whet your appetite:

- **DVD Player:** Put all that widescreen beauty to work and watch your favorite DVD movies with DVD Player! You have all the features of today's most expensive stand-alone DVD players, too, including a spiffy on-screen control that looks like a remote.
- **Contacts:** Throw away that well-thumbed collection of fading addresses on paper. Use the Mountain Lion Contacts application to store, search, and recall just about any piece of information on your friends, family, and acquaintances.
- **Chess:** Ah, but this isn't the chessboard your dad used! Play the game of kings against a tough (and configurable) opponent — your MacBook — on a beautiful 3-D board. Heck, your Mac even narrates the game by speaking the moves!

You can use the data you store in your Contacts in other Apple applications included with Mountain Lion, such as Apple Mail and Messages.

Boot Camp For Dummies

OS X Mountain Lion includes one particularly exciting feature for Windows switchers: You can use the Apple Boot Camp utility and your licensed copy of Windows 7 or 8 to install and boot Windows on your Intel-based Mac laptop!

Boot Camp creates a Windows-friendly *partition* (or section) on your hard drive, where all your Windows files are stored. Other than the slightly strange key assignments you'll have to remember, Boot Camp is reliable and easy to use. However, I strongly urge you to back up your laptop on a regular basis; inviting Windows to your Mac laptop also invites potential viruses as well.

Apple's Boot Camp Assistant provides step-by-step instructions, making it easy to configure your laptop for Windows. To run the Boot Camp Assistant, click the Launchpad icon in the Dock, click the Utilities folder icon, and then click the Boot Camp Assistant application icon. You can also download a free bonus chapter from the `www.dummies.com/go/MacBookFD4e` website (or my website, `www.mlcbooks.com`) that explains how to use Boot Camp in more detail.

Other Stuff That Nearly Everyone Wants

No man is an island, and no computer is either. I always recommend the same set of stuff for new PC and Mac owners. These extras help keep your new computer clean and healthy (and some make sure that you're happy as well):

- **A laptop sleeve or case:** Most laptop owners eschew the traditional bulky laptop bag, because a bag broadcasts the fact that you're carrying a valuable MacBook (and adds yet another item to carry on your trip). On the other hand, if you pack your MacBook in a briefcase, book bag, or backpack, you *need* to provide protection from bumps and scratches. That's where a laptop sleeve or thin case comes in. I use the very cool *BookBook* hardback leather case from Twelve South (`www.twelvesouth.com`), which looks — you guessed it — exactly like an old-fashioned leather-bound book from the outside! (I think it makes me appear scholarly while disguising my MacBook.) The BookBook (shown in Figure 1-3) is available for all sizes of MacBooks, costs about $80, and provides long-lasting, cushioned protection for your expensive road warrior.
- **An external camera:** Sure, your MacBook has a built-in FaceTime HD camera, but many folks prefer a stand-alone external camera that they can pan, tilt, and point where they like (especially those moviemakers who need high-resolution video clips of whatever's happening around them). I carry the stylish steel aGent V6 HD webcam from Liquid Digital Solutions (`www.liquiddigital.com.au`), shown in Figure 1-4, with my MacBook Air — it provides full 1080p high-definition recording in iMovie and connects to a USB port. You can choose to clip the webcam to your MacBook or use the desktop stand on any flat surface. The video quality is excellent, with auto exposure and low-light compensation for environments with less-than-perfect illumination. The aGent V6 HD webcam costs about $100.

Figure 1-3: The BookBook case provides protection and camouflage for your MacBook.

Figure 1-4: Break out your aGent V6 HD webcam for on-the-spot movie-making.

- **Surge suppressor:** Even an all-in-one computer like your laptop can fall prey to a power surge. I recommend using one of these:
  - *A basic surge suppressor* with a fuse can help protect your MacBook from an overload.
  - *A UPS (uninterruptible power supply)* costs a little more but does a better job of filtering your AC line voltage to prevent brownouts or line interference from reaching your computer.

    Of course, your laptop's battery immediately kicks in if you experience a blackout, so a UPS is less important for your computer. However, any computer tech will tell you that filtered AC current is far better for your laptop, and your UPS can also provide power for external devices that *don't* have a battery.

- **Screen wipes:** Invest in a box of premoistened screen wipes to keep your screen pristine. Your MacBook's screen can pick up dirt, fingerprints, and other unmentionables faster than you think.

  Make sure that your wipes are especially meant for LED, LCD, or laptop computer screens.

- **Blank CDs and DVDs:** If you're using a MacBook with an internal or external optical drive — and the type of media you're recording, such as computer data CDs, DVD movies, or audio CDs — you'll want blank discs for
  - CD-R (record once) and CD-RW (record multiple times)
  - DVD-R (record once) and DVD+RW (record multiple times)
- **Cables:** Depending on the external devices and wired network connectivity you'll be using, these are
  - A standard Ethernet cable (for wired networks or high-speed Internet)
  - FireWire, Thunderbolt, or USB cables for devices you already have
- **Restraining cable:** For those who are a little more security conscious or tend to use their laptops in public places, a standard Kensington laptop lock slot is provided on the MacBook Pro case. (Sorry, MacBook Air and Retina owners, but your case is too thin to sport a lock slot.) The principle is the same as a bicycle cable lock: If your laptop is secured by a cable to a sturdy fixture, it's nearly impossible for it to walk off with someone else.
- **Wrist rest:** You might have many reasons to buy a new Mac laptop, but I know that a bad case of carpal tunnel syndrome is not one of them. Take care of your wrists by carrying a keyboard wrist rest in your laptop bag.